

Ready to have a conversation about Christian Zionism in your church? Here is a sample discussion guide to get you started.

This is a working document. You know your community best, so please change this to fit your group. If you create new teaching tools, please share them with FOSNA (friends@fosna.org) so that we can distribute to our members doing this work nation-wide!

Who, where, when: First decide where, when and with who you're going to have this discussion. Is there a standing committee at your church for social justice work? A bible study? An adult education hours or Sunday school?

I. Introduction and Setting the Stage:

- A. Have the facilitator introduce themselves and why this is important to them, briefly, in a few sentences (ex., "I want to talk about Christian Zionism because I've seen how Christian theology is used to support violent military action.")
- B. Invite participants to share with a neighbor about why they are interested in this topic, what questions they have, or how they're feeling about the discussion. It's important to let people speak, early in the session, and give voice to questions.
- C. Contextualize the conversation:
 1. If the group you're in is not a decision making body, or if in this session no decisions need to be made, remind the group that they don't need to all agree about every part of this topic. The goal of this session is to listen and learn and remain open and curious, and it's ok if people leave with more questions.
 2. Facilitators are bringing both history, and their opinions, values and beliefs. We invite you to engage with both.
- D. Group agreements: remind the group of any values your congregation uses to guide conversations, or offer some specifically for this session. Group agreements can include:
 1. Share the air: be mindful of how much you're speaking in relationship to others.
 2. Acknowledge intent, attend to impact.
 3. Accept and expect a lack of closure.
- E. Open or close your welcome with a song, poem, or prayer.
 1. [The Prison Cell](#) by Mahmoud Darwish
 2. *Need some other texts here Kairos Palestine*

3. [*Sabeel Wave of Prayer*](#)

II. Christian Zionism: What is it?

A. Framing the conversation

1. Today we're going to talk about what's happening in Palestine/Israel, but with a specific focus on the role of a particular Christian theology, called Christian Zionism, and the role that Christian Zionism has and continues to have in influencing what happens in Palestine/Israel.
2. We know there is so, so much to discuss, today we're going to focus here and we can have other conversations other times.
3. We define **Christian Zionism** as:
 - a) a political and theological ideology that uses Christian texts to support the modern nation-state of Israel out of the belief that Israel has a cosmic purpose to bring about the "End Times" which will culminate in the second coming of Jesus and the end of the world.
4. Christian Zionism dates back to the early 1800s, and predates Jewish Zionism. Decades before Theodor Herzl founded the secular Jewish movement of Zionism (1897), British Christian leaders were already fixated with the idea that "Jews should move to Palestine."
5. Building off of popular theology at the time which viewed Europeans as "Christian Soldiers" transferring God's battle plans from the "[*Old Testament*](#)" into the modern era (or "dispensation" in their terms) they believed that Jewish rule in Palestine was part of God's strategy.
6. Discussion questions: (depending on size of group, can be done in whole group, small group, or break into pairs).
 - a) For Christians and people raised Christian, or raised in Christian families and communities: What were you taught about Israel in your church growing up? What were you taught about Christians' relationship to Israel?

- b) For general audiences and organizers for justice in Palestine: What, if anything, have you heard about Christian Zionism? What questions do you have about it? How is Christian Zionism addressed in the Palestine solidarity organizing that you do? How would you like it to be?

B. Impacts of Christian Zionism: why does this matter?

You can break up into five groups, and have each group read or discuss one of these ideas, then report back to the rest of the group.

1. Christian Zionism is anti-peace: CUFI's political goal is not "peace in the Middle East." Quite the opposite, as their theology and lobbying efforts show, they support Israeli dominance. CUFI has consistently decried any peace negotiation in the region, especially the [peace deal with Iran](#). To them war and hostility are positive signs that they are achieving their goals of bringing about the end of the world.
2. Christian Zionism is Christian supremacist: Christian Zionism was built upon, and maintains the idea Christianity exclusively. That Christianity holds the truth, and all other religions (and especially secularists) are inferior. Organizations like CUFI push for [Christian nationalism](#), the privileging of "cultural Christianity," and "traditional [read white] values" in American civil life.
3. Christian Zionism is anti-Muslim: The ideology of Christian Zionism demands an enemy. To evangelicals that enemy is Muslim. Christian Zionist leaders are some of the worst perpetrators of anti-Muslim bigotry in the world. As one researcher put it, "Nearly every evangelical supporter of Israel I spoke with joined his biblical and political views to reach two related conclusions: that God has given the Jews eternal ownership of the entire biblical land of Israel and that Arabs and other Muslims are determined to sabotage that divine covenant." Within Christian Zionism's conception, Muslims, and Arabs (they rarely differentiate between the two) must play the role of "enemies of God's will."
4. Christian Zionism is antisemitic: Organizations like CUFI claim to be "philo-semitic" based on a shared political interest with many Jewish organizations in "supporting Israel." Yet CUFI's support for

Israel's worst practices is purely self-centered, and not out of any care for Jews. Christian Zionism maintains Christian Supremacy, using Israel as proof of Christianities exclusive truth claims. The ideology does not care about Jewish values, Jews in diaspora, or Judaism, only Israel's value to Christian Zionism.

The words of Christian Zionist leaders bear this out. John Hagee, head of CUFI [propagates a number of antisemitic stereotypes](#). He has claimed that Hitler was a "half breed Jew," that God cursed Jews, that "Rothchild bankers in Europe" controlled the economy, that the holocaust was ordained by God to send Jews "back to Israel," and that antisemitism and the holocaust itself was the fault of Jews. He declared, "Their own rebellion had birthed the seed of anti-Semitism that would arise and bring destruction to them for centuries to come."

5. Christian Zionism is powerful: Christians United for Israel is the biggest and strongest Israel lobby in the country. They claim to have more than ten as many members as AIPAC. Though CUFI officially reports spending less money on lobbying than AIPAC, it's categorization as a "Church" [shields it from having to report much of its income and spending](#), allowing CUFI the power to spend without accountability.

C. Discussion:

1. Why is it important to you to confront Christian Zionism? How is it playing out in your local context? How would it impact your organizing for justice in Palestine to confront Christian Zionism?
2. Strategize: in local organizing you're doing, how would embedding or deepening an analysis of Christian Zionism impact your organizing? Would it change the targets you focus on? Or how you frame your campaign?

D. What else is there? Liberation Theology

Liberation Theology calls for the liberation of all people from forces of oppression. It critiques Colonial Christianity that claims superiority over

other religions and people. We confront the antisemitism perpetuated by European Christians as we recognize its connection to anti-Muslim and even anti-Catholic beliefs. Liberation theology demands that we have an intersectional analysis, not pitting the oppression of one group against another, but recognizing the systems that cause oppression.

E. Discussion:

1. As people who believe in peace and justice, what is our role in working for justice in Palestine?
2. What feels challenging about this?
3. What more do I want to learn?
4. What does living a liberation theology look like in my spiritual life?

F. Closing: Have the group identify what they want to do next, personal or collective commitments they want to make to challenging Christian Zionism.